

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

Drawing by G. E. Wolfe

By NORMAN SPRINGER



"I couldn't help crying—but I'm not a coward!"

A MAN had gone overboard that afternoon. He had slipped when reaching out to grasp a sling of powder as it swung inboard from the ammunition barge. He fell between the barge and the ship's side. His head struck the edge of a log fender, and he sank under water.

Obadiah Perkins, the little, soft-voiced chief master at arms, witnessed the accident from the forecabin. As the body was still in the air Obadiah dived and swam under the blunt bows of the barge. He came up in the twelve-inch space between the barge and the armor belt, the unconscious body over his shoulder. It took him a short moment to knot the bowline under the sailor's arms—and half a thousand men crowded the rail, and held their breath, and prayed that the Hampton Roads cross chop would not lift the barge nearer and grind the two to a pulp. Obadiah waited till the man was safe aboard; then he dived again, to free water. And the deck divisions, who had seen, cheered themselves hoarse as he climbed to the boat boom and came aboard.

After hammocks a group of us gathered in the lee of a stern launch on the spar deck, and talked it over.

"Quickest thing I ever seen," said White the coxswain. "And nifty! I bet there ain't two men on the ship would risk getting squashed flat that way. I wouldn't."

"Reminds me of one time in the B. & O. shops at Youngstown," began Mears the boilermaker. "We was snappin' rivets—"

"Oh, hlow the B. & O. shops! You're on a battleship now."

"But what gets me," said Job the machinist's mate, "is how that little runt does these things. He looks like he was afraid of his own shadow—and he never yells at a man. But look what he did to Big Lindsay, when Lindsay got wild drunk on shellac and chased everybody out of the washroom with a butcher knife! Just walked up to Lindsay and took the knife away, and then took him to the brig."

"Yes," said Potter, "and remember when he came aboard how everybody laughed to think of him being the Chief Legs [Legs or Jimmy Legs: a master at arms] of the toughest ship in the fleet. And now look how he's tamed the gang! If you want a crap game on payday, you got to dive into a double bottom. But he's sure got sand—and he don't look it."

"Which all goes to show," remarked Mears sagely, "that you can't never go by looks. Now, I remember in the B. & O.—"

"Curse the B. & O! You're in the navy now."

"No, you can't take the measure of a man by his looks: you've got to see him in action first," said Price

the red-headed gunner's mate. "We had a fellow on the Chesapeake, out on the Asiatic, two cruises ago—"

"Let her go," we urged; for Price's yarns were rare and good.

WE got him in Cavite," said Price, "along with a draft just out from home. He was a little, scrawny, seared looking rooky, and Hoosier was sticking out all over him. As soon as the draft came for'd the gang spotted him. Ginger, who was cook of the fifth division, began the fun."

"Hello, Percy!" said Ginger. "How's things in Osh-kosh?"

"I don't know," said the kid. "I'm from Mount Vernon, Indiana. My name isn't Percy."

"That got the first laugh, and fastened 'Percy' on the lad for keeps."

"If we had been on the home station, Percy would have dropped into the ship's ways easy enough, and nobody would have bothered him very much. But you know how it is on the Asiatic,—liberty only once every two or three months, and the heat and the sameness of things keeping you raw all the time. So the crowd hazed Percy just to have something to do."

"He was the rawest rooky I ever saw. He had big, washed out blue eyes, and one of those artist faces. His eyes would cloud and his mouth twitch like he was going to cry every time anyone spoke pough to him. At first he believed everything you told him."

"We worked all the old gags on Percy. Ginger did, especially. Ginger sent him to the officer of the deck for a hammock ladder, and to the bo'sn for the key to the keelson, and worked all the other old rhestnats on him. Percy was that innocent—he never seemed to tumble."

"Our division officer's name was Thompson. We called him Razorback behind his back, on account of him being so stiff and so much on his dignity. Ginger told Percy to call him Mr. Razorback. That gave us a laugh; but it caused Razorback to have it in for the kid, and he made Percy the division goat for everything that went wrong."

ABOUT a week after the draft arrived we sailed for a little cruise through the islands and down to the Celebes. It was two months before we got back to Manila. By that time the sport of hazing Percy was getting stale. Even Ginger was beginning to let him alone.

"As soon as we dropped anchor off Cavite the home mail came aboard. When 'Mail O' sounded Percy was the first one on the fo'c'sle. He got a handful of big, fat letters, and ducked off by himself to read them."

"About an hour later Ginger was passing a drumroom, and he heard a funny sound. He looked in. There was Percy, sitting in a corner, crying, the letters all bunched

in his hands. Ginger hailed the gang, and they crowded round the box and commenced to rag him. They thought he was homesick."

"Oh, dear, dear!" says Ginger. "And does the little Percy feel bad? Did his girly throw down her brave sailor boy and get another blue-eyed baby?" and so on, poking fun at the lad. Percy got up and pushed his way through the crowd, hiding his face in his hands like he was ashamed."

"He stumbled out of the drumroom door, and he humped into a tough little mess cook named Bates. Bates was carrying a bucket of water, and the bump knocked it from his grasp. It fell on his toe. Bates danced on one foot and swore. Then he noticed who it was that had bumped him, and also that Percy was crying."

"I'll give you something to slobber about!" he yelled, and swatted Percy twice across the cheek with his open hand."

"Well, you know the rule. We all expected Percy to mix it on the spot; or at least invite Bates to the fo'c'sle. He was as big as Bates, and the blows and the names that Bates called him demanded a fight. But Percy didn't even pause. He gulped a sob, buried his face in his arms, and slunk away, followed by our hoots."

"That fixed Percy with the ship's company. He was set down for a coward, and nearly everybody did something to make his life a little more miserable, especially Ginger. Ginger took a delight in bawling him out before the whole division. The petty officers gave him all the dirty work of the compartment. Razorback had something sour to say to him twice a day at quarters."

"His hammock was cut down several times at night; and more than once Percy turned out in the morning to find a monkey twist knotted in his hammock lashing, and had to spend ten minutes getting it free. Whenever that happened the Jimmy Legs always slapped him on report for late hammock; so Percy was always doing extra duty."

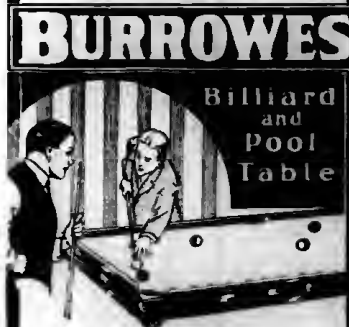
"Outside of duty Percy was as much alone as though he was the only man on the ship. No one would chum with him, or even talk with him friendly. When he went ashore he went alone. On board he would creep away by himself into some corner and moon."

"Everybody took a crack at him. He was looked upon just like a cur dog, and treated like one. More than once Ginger lifted a hand against him; but Percy never fought back. He never even complained; but often Ginger would catch him looking, his big, girl eyes full of misery, and seeming to ask 'Why?'

THE ship went down to Subig Bay for target practice. We were out for records. When the men went to their stations the morning we went on the range every

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section and every gun crew was determined to come out first.

"Ginger and Percy were both in the third section of the powder division. Their battle stations were in the ammunition passage to the six-inch guns. Razorback was the officer in charge. The third section was being 2 against the second section, which had the passage on the port side; and Razorback, who had a big bet up in the wardroom, was just as anxious as the men were to win the time record.

"Ginger was running the hoist to number five gun, and Percy was helping him. The Chesapeake had the old-style, endless-chain ammunition hoists, run by a motor. Nasty, dangerous things, they were, geared underneath, and without any guards. More than one man has lost an arm or a leg in them. The powder was sent up above loose; that is, it was taken out of the canisters in the magazine, and the charges went up to the guns without anything round the bags.

"It was hot there in the passageway. The men were stripped down to undershirts and pants, and sweating at that. Razorback took off his coat and threw it aside on the deck.

"As soon as the 'Stand by!' signal rang—five minutes before 'Commence fire!'—the third section rushed the powder out. They sent the first charges up to the guns. Then they piled extra charges on the deck at the foot of the hoists, so that all the hoist men would have to do would be to pick them up and slam them in. It was against regulations, of course, to lay the loose stuff out on deck that way. But you know how it is when you're after the record, and have money up. The third section meant to win.

"'Commence firing!' sounded—and then it was rush, rush, rush; half strangled by the ether and burnt powder, half deafened by the concussion—both worse down there in the ammunition passage than up by the guns themselves.

"A powder man rushed up to number five hoist and placed a bag on the deck. He turned to run back to the magazine, and he

stepped on Razorback's coat. There was a box of matches in that coat, and he ground them with his foot.

It was like a flash. The matches flared up in flame. There were three charges—three bags of powder lying next to the coat. The cotton of the nearest bag caught fire. Razorback gave a queer, choked yell. Ginger stood, stiff with fright. Percy threw himself down upon the smoldering bag, and rolled it to his bare breast—at the same time kicking the blazing coat out of the way.

"Ginger dived for the coat—slipped—and the cloth of his trousers caught in the moving chain belt of the hoist. It jerked him toward the gears. He squealed. Razorback jumped for the switch. Percy, dropping the now safe powder bag, hurled himself forward upon the shelf of the hoist. He thrust both arms beneath a descending cross strip, and grabbed the chains. There was a crunch, and the hoist stopped. Razorback pulled the switch, and the motor stopped. Ginger, with a pinched leg, was safe. It had all happened in less than ten seconds.

They had to pry Percy loose from the hoist. Both arms were mangled and fractured. He was conscious for a moment after they got him free; and when they picked him up to rush him to the sick bay his face twisted into a little smile, and he whispered to Ginger:

"I couldn't help crying that time, Ginger. I had just heard my mother was dead—and I couldn't fight. But I'm not a coward."

"And Ginger broke down and cried like a baby."

PRICE knocked the dottle out of his pipe and rose to go.

"How did it end? Did Percy die?" "No," said Price, over his shoulder. "He was in hospital for six months, and when he came back to the ship all hands manned the rail and cheered him aboard. They made him a Jimmy Legs afterward. His name wasn't Percy, you know,—it was Obadiah Perkins,—and I was Ginger."

THE WAR TERROR

does not neglect anything that can be done to make herself efficient in a military sense, so long as this does not bring in its wake a burden of taxation that simply would not be tolerated by the people.

SO much has been said by the alarmists regarding our alleged lack of reserve material for fighting that I secured from the War Department and reproduce here a table showing exactly what we have now in reserve, what is about to be put into reserve, and what is needed to complete the reserve. This table is the first complete statement I have seen of the situation, and is as follows:

MEMORANDUM OF THE STATE OF PREPARATION, IN THE PRINCIPAL ITEMS OF FIGHTING MATERIAL, OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY, FOR ENTERING UPON A WAR THAT WOULD REQUIRE THE EQUIPMENT OF AN ARMY OF ABOUT 460,000 MOBILE TROOPS AND 30,000 CAST ARTILLERY TROOPS:

	On hand	Additional provided for by appropriation	Total provided for	Total in project	Required to complete project
Rifles.....	1,037,000	36,749	1,073,749	600,000	
Pistols and revolvers.....	115,579	31,271	176,850	172,378	97,020
Sabers.....	68,763	5,000	73,763	41,006	11,006
Ball cartridges, caliber .30, models of 1906 and 1898.....	196,000,000	45,000,000	241,000,000	196,000,000	
Pistol and revolver cartridges.....	31,196,227	11,500,000	42,696,227	31,942,600	
Personal equipments (sets).....	476,161	27,839	504,000	504,000	
Horse equipments (sets).....	55,129	3,200	58,329	91,319	39,227
Machine guns.....	1,236	66	1,302	1,633	331
Field batteries complete, 4 guns each.....	169	46	215	325	110
Ammunition trains.....		3	3	63	60
Harness, wheel (sets).....	2,808	527	3,335	7,500	4,165
Harness, lead (sets).....	5,412	1,071	6,483	16,000	9,517
Ammunition for field artillery, rounds.....	177,800	402,200	580,000	1,137,000	557,000

In my discussion of the army here there has been nothing of a political or partisan nature, just as in Congress there could not be anything materially political in the handling of the appropriations for the army. Through Republican and Democratic administrations the land military forces have been treated in response to the spirit of the American people. By that I mean that both Democrats and Republicans have responded to the underlying and cardinal fact that the spirit of this country is unalterably opposed to a big standing army. Our people are against it. They would not favor it. They would recognize the folly of paying out hundreds of millions of dollars every year for such a purpose. They see too clearly that there is no need for it—and too there is in the mind of almost every American that, when the time comes he can take care of any military emergency that may confront him. He has

of this sort must be taken as a direct reflection of popular opinion throughout the country. If the people wanted a big standing army, they would have had it long ago. Congress would have yielded to their importunities if there had been any importunities to hear.

And the reason they do not want an immense military establishment is because they refuse to regard with serious eyes the "war terror" that is held up to their gaze by the militarists every year.

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